Information about the

The National Food Administration, Food Legislation and Food Control in Sweden

Official Agencies

In Sweden, the National Food Administration, an autonomous government agency reporting to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, is the central administrative authority for matters concerning food.

Sweden is divided into counties (21) and municipalities (290). Food control at the local level is the responsibility of the relevant municipal committee(s), usually the Environment and Health Protection Committee. The County Administrations are responsible for co-ordinating food control within each county.

The National Food Administration (NFA)
The NFA deals with all types of foodstuff, including drinking water. The meat inspection organisation is part of the NFA.

In the interests of the consumers, the NFA works towards three goals:
- safe foods of high quality;
- fair practices in the food trade and
- healthy dietary habits.

In order to achieve these goals, the NFA
- issues food standards and other food regulations;
- carries out supervision according to the Food Act and leads and co-ordinates food control in Sweden;
- keeps the Government informed about developments in the food sector;
- assists the Government with and participates in EU work and other international activities in the food area;
- carries out investigations and practical scientific studies on foods and dietary habits and develops methods for food control;
- informs consumers and other interested parties in the food chain about current legislation and other important matters related to food;
- participates in the implementation of the regional development policy;
- works for the development of the country’s school meals;
- co-ordinates questions concerning infant nutrition, including breast-feeding.

The NFA takes measures aimed at
- achieving effective and equivalent food control throughout the country;
- increasing the public’s, especially young people’s, knowledge about good and safe food so that they can make informed choices;
- increasing the publics, especially young people’s, knowledge about the connection between diet and health.
The NFA’s work is based to a large extent on international co-operation, especially within the European Union.

The Board of the NFA, which consists of 11 members, with the Director-General of the NFA as chairman, meets about eight times a year. It makes decisions on regulations issued by the NFA, budget proposals and the annual report submitted to the Government.

The Director General and the five heads of department are responsible for the day-to-day running of the NFA, which has a staff of about 300 at its headquarters in Uppsala. In addition, about 75 veterinarians and 105 meat inspection assistants work in the meat inspection organisation and are stationed at slaughterhouses throughout Sweden. The present organisation of the NFA in Uppsala is shown in the attached diagram.

Expert scientific advice for the NFA’s work is provided by the NFA’s own scientific divisions and experts and by external advisers and expert committees. The scientific staff includes a high proportion of graduate scientists, over 35 of whom have doctorates. Two professors on the staff provide expert advice on microbiology and nutrition, respectively. Scientific experts from the NFA take an active part in the work of the scientific advisory bodies of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the Council of Europe, FAO/WHO and other international organisations.

The NFA has about 45 external scientific advisers who are leading scientists working at universities, university hospitals or research institutes. The NFA has two external scientific advisory committees – on diet and health and paediatric nutrition, respectively.

The Food Standards Department contains the Swedish Contact Point for the Codex Alimentarius. The Research and Development Department contains the secretariat of the Swedish National Committee of the Nordic Committee on Food Analysis (NMKL).

The Food Control Department is the contact point for the European Community (EC) Rapid Alert System for Food (RASFF).

Other organizations
The NFA co-operates with other government agencies with responsibilities in related areas, including:

- Swedish Board of Agriculture (agriculture, including animal health and welfare, the veterinary services and animal feed);
- National Chemicals Inspectorate (pesticide registration and use);
- Medical Products Agency (registration of drugs for human and veterinary use);
- Environmental Protection Agency (environmental pollution and protection);
- Swedish Consumer Agency (consumer information, marketing);
- National Institute of Public Health (information on alcohol, tobacco, diet and health);
- National Board of Health and Welfare (health statistics and health services);
- Institute of Infectious Disease Control (epidemiology and control of foodborne diseases);
- National Veterinary Institute (animal diseases, feed control, national zoonosis centre);
- National Board of Fisheries;
Food Legislation

In Sweden, food legislation is made at three levels:
- the **Food Act**, issued by the Swedish Parliament, is a frame law, containing definitions and principles concerning *inter alia* food composition, handling, labelling, offering for sale, personnel hygiene, food premises, supervision/ control, penalties and appeals. It also empowers the Government, or an agency appointed by the Government, to issue regulations on food.

- the **Food Decree**, issued by the Government, develops the rules of the Food Act in some greater detail and gives the National Food Administration the power to issue further regulations in the food area and to approve food premises in certain types of establishment. The Decree also appoints supervisory authorities for all kinds of establishments handling food.

- **Ordinances**, issued by the National Food Administration, contain detailed regulations on *inter alia* food standards, labelling, food handling, additives, contaminants (pesticide residues, veterinary drug residues, heavy metals, mycotoxins etc.), supervision and internal control, food premises, personnel hygiene, drinking water, veterinary food control, export control, import control, food control laboratories and material for food contact use. The NFA issues binding regulations and provides information about regulations.

Sweden joined the European Union (EU) on 1 January 1995 and has harmonized its food legislation with that of the EC. As a member of the EU, Sweden takes part in the development of new EC legislation in the food area. European Community Regulations apply directly in Sweden. European Community Directives are transposed into NFA Ordinances.

Food Control

The National Food Administration is responsible at the national level for enforcing the Food Act and regulations issued under the provisions thereof. The County Administrations have responsibility for co-ordinating food control at the regional level and the municipal Environment and Health Protection Committees have responsibility for food control at the local level. The organisation and financing of food control in Sweden is currently under review.

National level
The NFA inspects slaughterhouses, dairies, egg product establishments, export-controlled establishments and other very large food-producing establishments (in all some 600 establishments). In addition, the NFA provides advice to the regional and local supervisory authorities and to the food industry and trade. It also initiates food control projects, which are
carried out by the local authorities and follows up the results of food control carried out at the municipal level.

The NFA organises the control of pesticide residues in fruit, vegetables and cereals. Samples are collected at ports of entry or wholesale markets. They are analysed at laboratories working under contract to the NFA. The results of the control of pesticide residues are published annually and are available on the Administration’s web site.

The NFA also organises the control of veterinary drug residues in foods of animal origin, mainly meat. Samples are collected at farms, slaughterhouses or ports of entry and are analysed at the NFA or at laboratories working under contract to the NFA.

The NFA has overall responsibility for export control. For food from countries outside the EU, inspection and sampling for microbiological (salmonella, etc.) examination as part of import control is carried out by the NFA at Border Inspection Posts.

Regional level
Each of the 21 County Administrations in Sweden is responsible for coordinating food control at the regional level, but they do not usually carry out any direct food control work.

Municipal level
The municipal Environment and Health Protection Committees carry out food control at all food handling establishments except those under the supervision of the NFA, including food production establishments, wholesalers, retailers, catering establishments and waterworks, altogether about 52,000 establishments.

Approximately 1,000 inspectors are involved in food control at the municipal level. However, some of these only work part-time with food control and the personnel involved in food control correspond to about 300 full-time inspectors.

Food samples collected by the municipal food control authorities are usually analysed by private laboratories accredited by the Swedish Board for Accreditation and Conformity Assessment (SWEDAC). At present there are about 50 such laboratories in Sweden, 25 of which work mainly with analysis of drinking water.

Financing of control, etc
The work of the NFA is financed partly by an annual appropriation from the Government (ca. 145 million Swedish crowns, SEK, for 2004), partly by fees paid by slaughterhouses and the food industry and trade (ca. 188 million SEK in 2004) and to a small extent by research grants, etc (17 million SEK in 2004) – in all ca 350 million SEK. The meat inspection service is financed entirely by fees collected from the slaughterhouse operators. Municipal food control is financed partly by local taxes and partly by fees collected from the food industry and trade for sampling and analysis. All establishments producing or handling foods (except very small operations) are required to pay an annual food control fee to the supervisory authority, i.e. the NFA or the municipal food control authority.

Contact with the National Food Administration
Address: Box 622, SE-751 26 Uppsala, Sweden Telephone: +46 18 175500 Telefax: +46 18 105848 E-mail: livsmedelsverket@slv.se Internet website: www.slv.se